

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
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Chambers of
MICHAEL P. MILLS
Chief Judge

February 1, 2012

**TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE BAR OF THE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI**

As you all know, we are deeply saddened by the passing of United States District Judge W. Allen Pepper, Jr. The cases previously assigned to Judge Pepper will be randomly reassigned to the other four District Judges. We anticipate that the increase in our civil case load will cause delays in the resolution of the cases on our criminal docket. As you know, the Magistrate Judges are unable by law to try criminal felony cases.

We do not anticipate an appointment of Judge Pepper's replacement prior to the election in November, 2012.

In order to ease the projected congestion of the civil docket, we have instituted procedures implemented in the past to help move the docket. For the civil draw, our court will now include the Magistrate Judges in the random draw of civil case assignments. Each Magistrate Judge will be assigned one of every ten cases on a random basis. If your case is assigned to a Magistrate Judge initially for all purposes, you will receive the notice and be furnished with an affirmative consent form for that assignment. If you decide to withhold consent, the case will be returned to the draw for reassignment. Let me assure you that if you should decide to opt out of proceeding before a Magistrate Judge, neither you nor your clients will be penalized. We are simply trying to insure the timely resolution of civil cases. Of course, you may still consent to a Magistrate Judge in cases originally assigned to a District Judge, as is the present procedure.

We hope that you and your clients will positively consider these assignments and consent to trial before them.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Magistrate Judges or the Clerk of the Court.

Sincerely


Michael P. Mills
Chief Judge